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# THE CRAYON.

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[WHOLE NO. L.]

## THE CRITICAL STANDARD.

If our position in reference to Art be the just one, viz., that it is a thing of essential use to man's ultimate perfection, there are two sequences equally just and inevitable: the first, that every person who recognizes the necessity of self-perfection, is placed under an imperative obligation to do all in his power to study it for himself, and foster it for others; and the second, that there is an absolute and supreme standard by which to judge of Art and its products, without reference to the caprices of individual taste, the influences of national habits or constitution, or the idiosyncrasies of partial genius. With regard to the former of these sequences, we have a feeling of utter despair at the thought of urging it upon the consideration of society. The immense majority of mankind, where enlightened, are divided into two classes, one of which, having no perception of duty in any direction, live for their own pleasure merely, and sacrifice heedlessly everything beside to it. If they by a gift of nature have a capacity for enjoying Art, it is still regarded as a minister to whatever capricious or absurd pleasure, to be studied, or neglected, used or misused, as that pleasure shall demand. It is useless to appeal to them, for they only regard Art as they do everything else, as adjunct to themselves, and having no existence beyond the impressions they receive from it. They would not be immortal save for their own gratification, but, like the serpent of the old natural history, which, when it would travel, took its tail in its mouth and rolled on, they find the circuit of existence in themselves, and end just where they began. The other class is that which, professing devotion to religion, comprehend only the one idea of Theology, and are buried in creeds and sectarianisms too deeply to see anything outside, and not content with the admission that Theology is the most important subject of human thought, insist that there is no other worth the care of immortal souls. Theirs is an ascetic temper, determined to go to Heaven by hard roads, to enter in blind, not because their eye offends them, but because it gives them delight, and to be glad untheologically, is to them sin. They read reverently the sermon on the Mount, but they do not remember the lesson of the lilies of the field. Besides these, there is a small remainder who, happily constituted and hopefully led, accept all the works of the great Creator as

blesed and good for contemplation and enjoyment. These acknowledge their obligation to strive for an unmutated humanity, an absolute perfection, and to this little minority are the interests of Art committed. We believe that in time the great theological class will recognize these truths which we now insist on, but we believe also in a millenium—to come. We regard it as casting bread upon the waters to promulgate a religious duty in Art—many days may bring it back, but the hope is faint that our time will see it; yet let the waters take it.

The second of our sequences, is, however, of immediate import, because it bears on that chosen few who do cultivate Art justly and fruitfully. To understand the relation of the values of artists' works, and to judge by the highest and absolute critical standard, is absolutely requisite to insure the healthy cultivation of the love of Art. Every genuine lover of painting or sculpture is to some extent a critic, for no man can love what he does not know, or what is not beautiful to him; but the perfectly comprehensive critic is probably an ideal which never will be found, which certainly never has been. Yet each one approaches that ideal as he rises to the comprehension of those central principles which govern the love of Beauty, and the highest critical stand-point is reached by him who regards Art in its highest and noblest relation of use to humanity. But this is not its technical use, for the technics of Art are only its grammar; not its intellectual, for its intellectual attributes are only its logic and rhetoric, its systematizing and setting in order—the essential use lies behind these and is their motive.

We have no *right*, therefore, to criticize pictures with reference to their execution, because execution is a matter to be considered only as of minor use; not with regard to their intellectual force, because intellect is worth nothing save when subservient to some just purpose. It is this purpose, the use which the work proposes to fulfill by which we must judge it, and according to the dignity of that is it to be acknowledged noble and worthy, or otherwise. This position, we are well aware, will be contested by most critics, and a large majority of artists even, but it is impregnable. Every analogy of nature insists on function as indispensable to existence, for everywhere the idle member dies, and society itself, in its whole range, from the bees to the angels, expels the useless alike with the vicious. The ravings of purpose-

less imagination, the vagaries of careless power, and the fanciful tricks of mere skill must, in the end, enter into oblivion with the work of the sensualist and brutal painter. The technical critic will clamor for the greatness of this one, and the fine training of that, but he must answer straightforwardly to the question, *cui bono?* what does it towards the elevation and bettering of mankind? And the stern award of the Truth will be, that the talent which is buried in its own earthiness, instead of being at usury, must be taken away from its possessor. There is no evading this issue—it stands, and will stand a perpetual remonstrant against that waste of artistic ability which, even in this age, if properly animated, would have filled scores of Vaticans.

It is evident, then, that there can be no such thing admissible as what men call judging the artist from his own standard; he has no right to assume a standard, because he exists as a member of the human family, and must labor in it, and in the end must be judged with it by the same law and the same judge. We have no business to compare Teniers with Gerard Dow, or Landseer with Snyders, and say this one or that is the greater; but there are two questions to be asked with reference to every man who paints—what use does he propose as the result of his picture? and, does he attain it? If these are answered satisfactorily to the true critical standard, the critic has no further business with him, and the fact that his works do not appeal to his individual mind, is one with which, as a judge of success, he has nothing to do. If the artist cannot respond to this inquiry as he should, it does not matter whether the use he proposes in his art is a base one, such as the fostering of pride or the stimulation of sensuality, or whether he cares only to display himself in his works; he must pass over the same road to the contempt and final forgetfulness of future ages.

But, it will be said to us, you are excluding the great majority of the artists of all time; you are consigning to nothingness many mighty intellects, men whom you have no right to judge even. We judge nobody, but the Truth which we declare shall judge all Art, and it does not matter if, in that judgment, the false shall be mighty or weak, one or thousands, the decision of that Truth is irrevocable and universal. Every man to whom Providence, in his organization, has given extensive range of thought, and intellectual force and

acuteness, is a great man, in the strict sense of the term, but not every great man is a just or a good one, and the greatness that wastes itself is more reprehensible than the prodigal littleness—more has been given and more will be demanded.

Another question will be asked us, What is the use of Art? It has two—one corresponding with that of Nature, and no higher, which every artist fulfills when he earnestly and reverently reproduces her for human elevation; the other, the development from actual Nature of the laws which govern her Beauty, and the formation thence of the Ideal. They are the Art of the Actual and the Art of the Ideal, and within these classes are found all modifications of the really vital and useful Art. Outside these all art is base, nor does it matter that the great majority of men who study Art find pleasure in works which comply with neither of these requisitions, and that the multitude of artists, whom such a judgment would exclude from favor, do find their admirers, and patrons, and students. The vast majority, both of artists and amateurs, are those who regard Art only as a means of present pleasure, and repudiate alike all function of it to them, or of duty from them to it, but the Truth is absolute and self-existent, nor does it import anything if the whole world is arrayed against it.

#### EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST.

BY JACK TUPPER.

NO. V.

[The following reminiscences appear, from their place in the Diary, to have been written some years after its commencement. J. T.]

#### (Reminiscences Continued.)

So the glory of the Townley Gallery faded: the grandeur of "Rome" passed. Walking between those marbles, gazed on by Augustus and Trajan, was an exploded magic. Some of their heads were too small—a deficiency of skin was observed, and a maladministration of muscle.

I worked at anatomy hard now. I copied the tables of Albinus—found them unsatisfactory—studied Lizarz, at the library, and the "Dublin Dissector," at the hospital. I contended with Rome in the dissecting-room, its Theatre, my Theatre of Marcellus. I dissected, and would have vivisected, my countrymen, to refute the anatomy of Rome. But Greece was in the ascendant—the Elgin Room, holy ground: the "Thesens" and "Ilissus" were "sculpture," and the "Metopes" and "Frieze of Parthenon."

My enthusiasm here was vital. I made drawings and models of the Thesens, and dissected to verify its anatomy. So one morning, when a student was "getting out," on the dissecting-table, the muscles of a leg, with which I was comparing a model of the right leg of the Thesens, he ventured the opinion, that the ancients only studied the surface of the body, their religious re-

verence for the dead not permitting them to dissect; and, since their anatomy was correct, as I myself represented, he wondered "why I took all that trouble." "And what makes you think so?" said I, disgusted at the cool way in which he assumed the fact. "I thought I had told you," he answered. "And it will be rational, then, for our grandsons, when they read that we give our dead Christians burial, and that we dissect likewise, to conclude that the first is true, and the second false?" I interrogated. "As rational," he replied, "as the second part of your parallel is true." "But it is true," said I. "It is false," said he. "Come, sir," I called out, "you say I have asserted a falsehood; it remains for you to prove it, or I shall say you are—are a!"

"What?" he asked. "A blackguard!" Ten thousand furies! He was a Westminster boy, and struck out, by a law of their school, which forbids them to answer otherwise to that word. In parrying the blow, I dropped my model, and it broke; which, when he saw, leaving open his guard, he stooped and picked it up, saying he was "sorry for that," and as he had struck first, and I was a "plucktun," he would withdraw the lie if I would the blackguard. So we both shook hands, and it ended for that time. But the next day, when the Demonstrator (who had heard of the *fracas*) advised me solemnly, that the alternate actions of my Biceps and Triceps would scarcely prove that the ancients dissected those muscles, the question was made an open one, and much learned evidence adduced. A passage of Tully was quoted, describing graphically the internal organs: this could hardly be done without actual inspection. So the *Roman* "autopsy" was settled. We proceeded upward into Greece, then; and found the fact of anatomy, at the school of Alexandria, almost indisputable. This, however, was in the time of Lysippus. Now it was the dissection of the human subject, in the Phidian period of Art—the age of Pericles—that was being considered. Was there any evidence, historically or rationally inductive, that in that period human anatomy was prosecuted in Greece? A gentleman (who might have looked warm) declared that "that was the question, and he did not care a button whether Lysippus dissected or not!" (A Dresser took notes of the proceedings, whence it happened that the "button argument" was sometimes alluded to in future investigations.) And now there seemed an absence of historical record; the affirmative evidence faltered, and a short gentleman was assuring the meeting, "that though Phidias might have seen a portion of denuded facia in a wounded Samian, anno mundi 3572, the hemorrhage, in deep flesh wounds, would effectually prevent," &c., &c.; and it was being sorrowfully conceded that the Greek dissecting table, anterior to the foundation of the school of Alexandria, was graced only by "canine subjects," which, obtaining long time after, gave rise to that species of Latin in the medical world, when a gentleman, stepping forward, asked Socratically, whether there was reason to believe that the Greeks had more superstitious reverence for their dead, and less reverence for science, than the Romans had? Which questions the examples of Hippocrates and Aristotle having decided in favor of the Greeks, who

were not only more scientific, but (inductively) less superstitious. The speaker went on to say, "the question was now one of probabilities. Given that the Romans dissected the human subject, and (he quoted Tully in proof) even vivisected criminals; granted that the Greeks had more incentives, and no more obstacles, to dissect than the Romans had. What were the probabilities that the Greeks dissected?" This was definitive. The Chairman, the Demonstrator, addressed the meeting. "He was happy to say, that though business would immediately call them to the Lecture room, there was no need to adjourn the debate, seeing that the meeting had unanimously determined, in absence of affirmative evidence, that there was, nevertheless, a high probability that Phidias and the carvers of his time had attended autopsical demonstrations of human anatomy, if they had not actually themselves used the scalpel; and that the meeting were influenced in this their opinion, not merely by the learned evidence immediately before them, but indirectly also by some striking arguments advanced yesterday, he believed, in a private conference with the gentleman who had just now favored them with his ideas. And he could only say, in conclusion, that he hoped the unanimity experienced to-day would pervade all the future discussions."

Certainly I must have roared very vociferously about Grecian Art to have awakened anything like an echo within those walls, where the most capable of the students had far too many lectures to attend to think of much else. At the head of these must, unquestionably, be counted my friend Galt (with whom I had the row), a strange mixture of strong dry logic, and acute poetic perception. He was the only one, I think, who never once alluded to that unfortunate affair, whilst he gave me much assistance in anatomy by his dissections, and took an interest in Art besides.

But I must review my progress in Art. My illness squandered six months of my life, leaving me weak, emaciated, and the subject of frequent sore throats. I must have been sixteen before I fairly commenced at the Museum. My enemy still pursued me; and often when I returned to my labors, after a fortnight's nursing, it was to find my drawing-board with difficulty, my drawing not at all, and my drawing-pins owned by another. There were other obstructions besides illness; opportunities occurred for earning money, which, as my family was far from rich, I embraced with alacrity. My father's business—for after the loss of his estates, by foul play, he had set up stationer in the city—offered occasional employment to the artist, and vignettes, etchings, and lithographs, were gladly turned over to me, not merely for the saving of expenses, but from an unfortunate eagerness on my part, originating perhaps, in the laudable desire to contribute to the family stock; perhaps to vindicate my choice of a profession which was certainly never duly assigned me in "Parliament assembled," but intrigued, and crept into by degrees, through an influence at the "Home Office," obtained by a "maternal relative;" and if "active members" took occasion to snub my position as a sinecure, I was the more anxious, at intervals, to demonstrate its importance to the house. My father, I think, would willingly have